

HONOLULU, HAWAII TERRITORY, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1909.

## - The Genesis of a Fire Department -



Looking back through an early number of Thrum's Annual I found an item relating to the Honolulu Fire Department in which there is much of interest to the people of Honolulu. Reference to old numbers of the Polynesian disclosed more information and among the data was an account of a fire that took place back in the early '50s, before Honolulu had a department devoted to the extinguishing of fires.

It was in those days, even before 1850, that the discovery of a fire at night was usually announced by a policeman. There are men in business today who will remember the peace guardians going the rounds at night carrying lanterns, a red light indicating the even number and the blue light the odd. They will remember, also, seeing as they walked along to or from home the lights hanging at a corner of a street and of hearing the oft told tale "Eleven o'clock, and all's well." One resident tells me that it was a monotonous call for the men were obliged to announce each half hour. It may have been annoying to the sleeper who couldn't sleep, but think what it was to the poor policeman who had to keep awake whether or no.

Fire engines and hose carts, up to this time, were an unknown quantity here, but there was an unwritten law that compelled every occupant of store and dwelling to have on his premises not less than two buckets filled with water for a fire brigade. That the fires were not extensive ones may have been due to the fact that Honolulu architecture was, in the main, of the grasshouse era. There were not many buildings having a second story nor many very elaborate ones of one floor. The town got along fairly well with buckets for as many years as it was old and the change came when some new blood was infused into the town.

### The First Brigade.

Somewhere in the middle '40s Alexander Cartwright, a resident of New York, contracted "wanderlust" and moved West. It was before the days when Greeley gave his advice to eastern youth to go "West and grow up with the country"; before, even, John Marshall had panned out the first pay dirt in California. Young Cart-

wright was robust and a fine specimen of manhood. Mining, however, though it was at its height when he was in California, did not have the lure for him that it had for others. Honolulu was very new in those days and he was looking for something newer than the mainland offered so he came. While a young man in his home city he took a great interest in fires and became attached to the fire department. Possibly he was one of the boys who wore shiny caps and spit locks, as was the custom in those days. Anyone who ever saw Frank Chanfrau as "Mase" will understand the character, and anyone who knew Alexander Cartwright during his long and honorable career in Honolulu would fail to recognize a bare resemblance.

However, when Mr. Cartwright landed here in 1849 or '50 he thought of a fire department and baseball. He remembered that he was one of the organizers, and was for many years secretary of the old "Knickerbocker" Baseball Club of New York, the first organization of the kind in the State and one which had existed for many years. The game had bent his energies to the formation of a fire department in 1852. A meeting of interested citizens was called and an organization proposed and effected with Cartwright as chief engineer. He brought into the department all of the customs and rules of the New York volunteer department, that were available, and which the conditions would permit.

### First Big Fire.

The first fire of any importance after the organization of the fire department occurred in 1852. This was down near the waterfront and was started by a mob of deep water sailors who had precipitated a row with some of the town boys. It was, practically, a riot and the police could not restrain the participants. What property was not destroyed by fire was almost totally wrecked by the mob. After the affair had quieted down the losers by the fray and fire appealed to the government for redress but as usual in such cases the attorney-general, who, at the time, was a gentleman named Lee, decided that after a careful investigation he had found that the government was not responsible.

The following year there were a few small fires involving loss of a few houses in one instance and a dwelling in another. One of these was recorded in the Polynesian of 1853 where appears the following:

"The alarm of fire on Thursday afternoon was occasioned by the taking fire of the cook house in connection with

Mr. Bond's confectionery establishment in Fort street. The cook house was a slight wooden structure which was nearly consumed when the fire was arrested. It originated from a stove-pipe. The loss was estimated at \$300."

### Coming of Insurance.

The same issue of the paper contained an item of the same tenor but referring to another paper and later in the week it was announced that the occupant of the place had been left destitute by the occurrence. Of course these little blazes were mere bagatelles compared with the sailors' fire or the burning of the Varieties Theater on the site of the present von Holt building, where the Gazette company now is. That one burned two business blocks and the police station, which was then on King street. The loss was estimated at the time as \$25,000. But blessings followed. The damage was great and the owners of property, and the merchants who carried a large stock of goods, considered ways and means of protection. R. C. Janion entered into correspondence with the California agents of the North American Insurance Company, and secured the agency for the Islands.

The Varieties fire occurred July 7, 1855, and there were two companies in existence: The Honolulu Fire Company, with a roll call of seventy and the Mechanics No. 2 with eighty men. The Mechanics was not as old a company as the one started by Mr. Cartwright, the latter ranking it a few months, and the usual rivalry existed and was fed whenever there was a fire.

There was the usual fight for first water and the glorification after it was secured. What followed the glory had better not be mentioned. The first extinguishers were, of course, of the hand variety and every fire meant harder work than is experienced by the average fireman of this day.

The first of the kind was in the scrap heap out at Jimmy Lemon's place some years ago, an object of regard of all the oldtime firemen who saw it as they passed in the cars. Engines came after the hand machines and steam was the motive power for pumping the water. As the town grew the demand for more fire protection was with it side by side, but it was eight years after the organization of the Mechanics that the Hawaii No. 4 came into existence with a membership of sixty.

### Real, Shiny Brass.

These were classed as engine companies, and the year that gave birth to the Hawaii No. 4 let its shine on the brasswork of the Pacific Hose Company, whose membership was composed largely of white men, the swells of the period—men who usually appeared on dress occasions in broadcloth and silk tail hats. The Protection Hook and Ladder Company came into existence about the same time. These companies were not immediately admitted into fellowship with those already in the department, and in one instance it is recorded that a lapse of nearly a year occurred between the organization of a company and its recognition by the department.

### Fire Took Early Records.

Complete data of the department is not obtainable. Charles Gulick, who for a number of years was its secretary, lived where the Lewis brothers now have a grocery store. Next was the home of J. H. Thompson, and in the same yard Mr. Gulick had a cottage and kept the records there. Gulick's house caught fire, and with the fire came the destruction of the records of the volunteer fire department up to that date.

During the reign of the late William C. Parke as marshal of the kingdom, he, by virtue of his office, considered himself the "First Engineer" of the department, but he was not regularly elected, as was Cartwright, and he held office ex officio. Under the marshal was an organization known as the Fire Police. These men acted somewhat as the policemen did, looking after the goods as they were removed from a building and preventing looting. They did good service at every fire. There were no fixed districts in those days and no regular signals. On the discovery of a fire there was a prompt clanging of bells and shouts of "Fire House" by persons nearest the scene.

### Encouraging the Chinese.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the houses burned, up to that time, were owned or occupied by the Chinese, there was more or less trouble to get their assistance when it was needed, and at times it became necessary to use drastic measures to get them out. Being yanked along the street, occasionally by their cues, wore on them until they decided to do a little fire-fighting on their own account and in their own way. A meeting of influential residents in the Chinese colony was called for action, and the money necessary for the purchase of a steam fire engine was forthcoming. When the government saw they were in earnest, it built a house for them on Maunakea street, and for years afterwards, Chinese Engine Company did good service. On February 3, when the companies came out for drill, the best of the Chinese population marched in line with the rest.

### Healthy Rivalry.

An old member of one of the early companies said in conversation the other day: "There was always more or less rivalry among the volunteers in the matter of reaching the fire first, and after the fire was put out, there was an occasional scrap. February 3 was the day set apart for the annual parade, and we usually wound up with a feast. This was not given by the department, but each company would act independently. One year, and it was the last I remember attending, we decided on a luss and invited a num-

ber of guests. The spread was to be a big one, and in the open. We had sat down at the table and the signal was given to begin. In a minute the table was swept clear, and I can plainly see, after all these years, Hawaiians putting away food and bottles of beer, under their coats, and taking the stuff home to the children and friends who were unable to come. It settled semi-public gatherings of this character, and after that we gave our dinners to company members in our homes."

### Prize Contests.

The annual drill by the different companies was always interesting, and, as usual, much rivalry existed at these affairs as well as at a fire. The test was in the throw of water, and the place was down on Kaahumanu street, where the father of J. Mort Oat had a sail loft. There was always a flagpole on top of the building, but on these occasions it was not high enough and had to be spliced. The engine that could throw a stream over that pole held the prize for a year, or until another company outdid it.

And there was a good deal of feeling at some of the company elections. It is told of one of the Pacific Company, where an engineer was elected against a strong opposition, that when it came time to seat him a man high in the councils of the sovereign bounced him. The matter was presented to the cabinet and the minister of the interior ordered a new election.

### The Line of Chiefs.

During the existence of the volunteer department there was a good deal of politics done and when the change in the form of government came there was a desire on the part of the officials to eliminate this feature. It was decided to put the department under a commission. Up to that time the chiefs had been Alexander J. Cartwright, Richard, Gilliland, Richard Neville, Benjamin F. Snow, C. E. Williams, Charles N. Spencer, John A. Hassinger, James S. Lemon, George Lucas, John Nott, Charles B. Wilson, Frank Hustace, Julius Asche and James H. Hunt. At the close of the department by the change of government all of the material was taken over but the company accounts were, I believe, divided pro rata among the members. The list of chiefs given may not be in the order

in which they served. Of the thirteen named nine have passed to their reckoning. One of them, Neville, having been killed by a religious sect in Kona. John Nott is still engaged in active business, Charlie Wilson is with the road department. Frank Hustace is in business and Julius Asche is jailor at Oahu Prison.

### The Present Department.

Jim Hunt, the last chief of the volunteers, became the first chief of the paid department, having as his assistant Charles H. Thurston who succeeded as chief at the time of his death. Its effectiveness is due entirely to the efforts of Mr. Thurston. He has studied firefighting under the best and most experienced chiefs of the big departments on the mainland and has profited by what he saw when in company with them he watched fires that amounted to conflagrations and saw how they were extinguished. His visits to the Coast since he took up his residence here, and became attached to the department, have been for the purpose of study and he has not lost a moment of the time intended for that duty.

Naturally there is a difference in favor of the paid service. When the department was started in the early fifties Honolulu had no regular water supply, but when it was established the use of engines was not always necessary because there were few buildings at that time so tall that a stream from a fire plug would not carry over it. In these days everything has grown except the water supply and it seems that the more money spent upon it the more frequent are the announcements that the precious liquid shall not be used for irrigation purposes.

The present department consists of three regular stations, one of them being known as Central, at the corner of Berea and Fort; one at Palama and another at Makiki. There are four engines in commission and one in reserve. Two of these are at Central and in addition there is a chemical engine with two double eighty tanks.

### Chinatown Station Needed.

Somewhere there is a hook and ladder outfit, but it is like a gun without ammunition. The fact that such a thing is greatly needed seems not to have been recognized by the govern-

ment for it is without a home and without a crew or horses to pull it. An effort is to be made to get this in commission. Chief Thurston has the right idea about it for he is going to suggest that a place in Chinatown be built for it and No. 1 engine be housed in the same building. This will give that section of the city ample fire protection, if the supervisors will see the necessity for it as the chief does.

There are in all forty-seven employees of the department and every one is taken in on his merit. He is put through a drill and if his limbs are stiff or he shows reluctance to go a dizzy height he does not get in. The chief has kept his men absolutely free from politics and in that way he has maintained a discipline not surpassed anywhere in the United States. Probably no city of its size on the mainland has a department to compare with it in efficiency. Drills are held once each week for the men and once a month, in which the engines are tested at the waterfront, a very good test because it necessitates a pretty high lift.

Dry drills, a term with which all firemen are familiar, are held twice each week and are of great benefit to the men.

### Chief Thurston.

Chief Thurston went into the department in 1897 and by strict attention to his duties rose from the ranks to become assistant chief and finally to succeed Mr. Hunt as chief. Courtrooms at all times, he is at once strict in the administration of the affairs of his department. He demands close attention on the part of his men, but he does not bend so far that he is considered a martinet. There is no rowdiness among the men under him and no one is allowed to become attached to the fire department unless he has a testimonial as to character, can pass the necessary physical examination and show aptitude in mastering the drill which is held at the central station. Assistant Chief Deering being in charge when the chief is absent.

The department is large enough, in point of numbers of men, to establish a fund for the benefit of disabled firemen. It is done elsewhere and should be here. Perhaps Mr. Thurston has not thought of it. When I see him I intend to mention it and then work it out.



HOME OF FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPANIES 1 AND 2.

### THIS FLY COULD FLY.

Dr. Wolling furnishes the following experience and observation with the large horsefly, says the Newberry (S. C.) Observer:

"Some years ago a large horsefly, in his wild flight, came plump against my eye and gave me a great deal of pain and discomfort. This little piece of experience put me to wondering how fast they could fly, but without furnishing me with any means of finding out. However, another piece of experience, or rather observation, has given me some light on the question.

"In my late trip I went down from Columbia to Sumter, a distance of forty-two miles, on the fast train to Charleston, which makes no stop from Columbia to Sumter, and covers the distance in an hour and ten minutes, or at about forty miles an hour. At a certain part of the journey I was standing at the back end of the train, and had just noticed that we were going at a very lively rate and must be making a full average speed, and was impressed with how the track below was flying away from us. Just at that moment I noticed a large horsefly take the track behind us, about on a level with my head, and start after the train, and in an incredibly short time it was seated on the door facing, riding along quite at ease. Then it would dart off, circle around a little, and then again start after the train, which it could easily overtake.

"So its speed must have been upward of forty miles an hour, and it was not doing its best. So you might truly say there was a fly that could fly."

In Iowa the idea is advanced that full and complete reports of the transactions of school boards be published in the local press, as is now provided by law in the case of county boards of control and city councils.

### THE SCAMPIRE.

A lad there was, and he went to school (Even as me and you), But he called it a "college," by rote and rule, So he strated right in to play the fool, And he never took in that the dunce's stool Was waiting to find a crew!

A kid he was, but he led the van (Even as kidslets do), He whooped and yelled like a bleacher fan, As brash and as void as an empty can; But he thought he was really a great big man, And leading the bunch, a few,

A dream he was, in his roaring socks (Even as all must see), A dream that awakes and alarms and shocks, With sweaters that howl for a block of blocks, And charming the creatures of fills and frocks With swaggar of deviltry.

A drone he was, like a lazy Turk (Even as one might guess), He worked at his play and played at his work, He settled his books with a slam and a jerk, And lit on a thousand ways to shirk, A little bit less and less!

A chump he was, with a cigarette (Even as flows the tide), With a cuss word ready and cash to bet, But waiting a lesson he won't forget, When the wind is cold and the rain is wet, And the world will tax his hide! —Judge (with apologies to Kipling.)

The extension of an electric railway from Palo Alto to Stanford University is owned by the university but will be operated by the Peninsular Railway.

### SOYA BEAN INDUSTRY.

Washington, D. C., advises report that oil millers of Liverpool are disposed to regard the products of the soya bean as additional articles of trade and not as competing to replace the manufacturers of cottonseed, according to a report transmitted by Consul Horace Lee Washington of that city. The Consul adds: "The first complete cargo of soya beans that arrived in the United Kingdom reached Liverpool February 14, 1909, and the interest in this new industry has grown apace since then. Experiments being made in various other parts of England as well as in Liverpool that range from a blend of soya flour, made by an expert Liverpool baker, with flour and with meal, about one-fifth for mixing with flour and one-sixth for meal, to a soya dog biscuit. The blending of soya flour above referred to is desirable by reason of its demonstrated food value. In albuminoids soya beans are stated to be nearly three times as rich as oats and wheat and possessed of more fiber and ash. A few German millers are reported to have mixed soya and rye flour in experiments in the making of the black bread of that country, and local millers here are experimenting with a blend to improve their own brown bread. A vegetable cheese is known to be produced from the casein that the bean contains, but this has not advanced from the experimental to the commercial stage.

There can be no public school in Indiana which does not have an average attendance of at least twelve pupils. If the number falls below that the pupils must be transferred to some other school.

In Philadelphia recently Afro-American women engaged in church work held a gathering at which a mock general conference was called over which women acted in the capacity of bishops, presiding elders and general officers.